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Edward Cooperman, a physics professor shot dead last October, varied his routine daily after returning from a trip to Vietnam because he feared two "hit men" were after him, his widow testified today.

Minh Van Lam, 20, a Vietnamese immigrant, is on trial charged with the murder of Cooperman, who advocated normal relations between the United States and Vietnam, six weeks after he returned from his trip.

The defense has maintained the 48-year-old Cooperman's death was an accident and that Lam had no reason to want the victim dead.

But friends of the professor claimed he was assassinated by anti-Communists.

The widow, Klaaske Cooperman, told the Superior Court jury that Cooperman, who taught at California State University at Fullerton, bought a gun at one time and said two "hit men" were coming from Texas to kill him.

On the morning of his death, Mrs Cooperman said, he received a telephone call and told her the Vietnamese mission at the United Nations said he would have to go to New York.

She told the jury of seven women and five men he had mentioned a group called "the Frogmen" to her.

According to her husband, she said, these were Vietnamese military men who were trained in warfare by the Central Intelligence Agency.

After he mentioned the Frogmen, she had floodlights installed in their driveway. "This was for his safety because of threats," she said.

She said she knew little about her husband's links to Vietnam, but added she understood he was involved in 35 projects, including hospitals and rice dryers.

The prosecutor, Mel Jensen, earlier said Lam told police he took a revolver to Cooperman's study at the university, and the gun went off accidentally.